

## **Command History**

### **USS ANTIETAM (CG-54)**

**2001**

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**1. Command Composition and Organization:** As of 31 December 2001

**MISSION:** AIR WARFARE  
SURFACE WARFARE  
UNDERSEA WARFARE  
STRIKE WARFARE

**Organizational Structure:** Commander Carrier Group Three

**COMMANDING OFFICER**

CAPT L.J. Quilici II (01 JAN 01- 06 MAY 01)  
CAPT R.T. Rushton (07 MAY 01- 31 DEC 01)

**Executive Officer**

CDR M.H. Dalton

**Combat Systems Officer**

LCDR Dave Glenister  
LT Jefferey Bennett

**Engineering Officer**

LCDR Michael Wieczorek

**Operations Officer**

LCDR Dan Bryan

**Supply Officer**

LCDR Rick Smiley

**Weapons Officer**

LT Thaddeus Smith

**Homeport:** Naval Station, San Diego, CA

**Aircraft Assigned:** Helicopter Anti-submarine Squadron Light 43  
Detachment 4  
Officer in Charge: LCDR Craig Anderson  
Aircraft: Two SH-60B Seahawk Helicopters

**Commanding Officer**

**Executive Officer**

**Engineering Department**

MP Division: Main Propulsion Assistant- LT Troy Fendrick  
Main Propulsion Division Officer- ENS Dawn Baker  
EA Division: Auxiliaries- LTJG Mark Hobdy  
EE Division: Electrical- LTJG Matt Wiens  
ER Division: Repair/Damage Control- ENS Heather Horsley

**Operations Department**

1st Division: Deck- ENS Danny Cerezo  
OE Division: Electronic Warfare/Crypto- CWO2 Ray Fredricks  
OI Division: Combat Information Center- LTJG Darin Marvin  
ON Division: Navigation- LTJG Marc Brandt

**Combat System and Training Department**

CE Division: Electronic Repair- CWO2 Floyd Pinkney  
CC Division: Communications- ENS Amy Lindahl  
CS Division: Systems Division- LTJG Drew Martinez  
I/ DC: Indoctrination and Damage Control- LTJG Matt Tucker

**Weapons Department**

CA Division: Undersea Warfare Division- ENS Mark Eutizi  
CG Division: Gunnery- ENS Josh Stephens  
CM Division: Fire Control- LTJG Jason Reinsch  
CT Division: Tomahawk- ENS Katherine Sailor

**Supply Department**

S-1 Division: Supply Parts- SKC(SW) Domaoal  
S-2 Division: Food Service- ENS Melinda Johnson  
S-3 Division: Ship's Store- ENS Oliver Jones  
S-4 Division: Disbursing- ENS Oliver Jones

**Navigation/Administration Department**

NX Division: Administration- PNCS(SW) Demag  
Chaplain: LT Phil King

## 2. Chronology

Inport San Diego, CA	01JAN-22JAN
Underway SOCAL	23JAN-26JAN
Inport San Diego, CA	27JAN-29JAN
Underway SOCAL	30JAN-01FEB
Inport San Diego, CA	02FEB-12FEB
Underway SOCAL COMPTUEX	13FEB-02MAR
Inport San Diego, CA	03MAR-11MAR
Command Picnic	09 MAR
Underway enroute Seal Beach, CA	12MAR
Inport Seal Beach, CA Ammo Onload	13MAR-14MAR
Underway enroute San Diego, CA	15MAR
Inport San Diego, CA	16MAR-02APR
Underway SOCAL	03APR
Inport San Diego, CA	04APR-09APR
INSURV	09APR-12APR
Underway SOCAL UMI	10APR
Inport San Diego, CA	11APR-03MAY
Underway SOCAL	04May-10MAY
Change of Command	07MAY
Inport San Diego, CA	11MAY-17MAY
Underway SOCAL JTFX	18MAY-30MAY
Inport San Diego, CA	31MAY-03JUN
Underway SOCAL JTFX	04JUN-13JUN
Inport San Diego, CA	14JUN-18JUN
Underway SOCAL MISSILE-EX	19JUN-21JUN

Inport San Diego, CA	22JUN-25JUL
Underway WESTPAC Enroute Hawaii	26JUL-01AUG
Inport Lualualei, HI Ammo Onload	02AUG-03AUG
Underway enroute Singapore	04AUG-20AUG
PASSEX with Royal Singapore Navy	20AUG
Inport Singapore	21AUG-25AUG
Underway enroute Phuket, Thailand	26AUG-27AUG
Inport Phuket, Thailand	28AUG-03SEP
Underway	04AUG-15DEC
Strait of Hormuz Transit	15SEP
Maritime Interdiction Ops	16SEP-07NOV
MODLOC with PELARG World Trade Organization Conf	08NOV-13NOV
Maritime Interdiction Ops	14NOV-17NOV
Strait of Hormuz transit	18NOV
SAR Northern Arabian Gulf	19NOV
Strait of Hormuz transit	20NOV-21NOV
Inport Mumbai, India	15DEC-17DEC
Underway enroute Singapore	18DEC-22DEC
Inport Singapore	23DEC-26DEC
Underway enroute Pearl Harbor, HI	27DEC-31DEC
Crossing the line ceremony	27DEC

**Deployments:** Western Pacific and Arabian Gulf (26JUL-31DEC)

**Exercises and Operations:** COMPTUEX, JTFX, RSN PASSEX, OPERATION  
ENDURING FREEDOM

**Change of Command:** Captain L.J. Quilici II relieved by Captain R.T.  
Rushton 07MAY

Major changes to Organization, name, Mission or function:	None
New Weapons systems Or major equipment:	None
Major physical Alterations:	None
Logistic Support:	None
Major command awards:	Battle "E"
Major Command Problems:	None
Major units embarked or disembarked:	None
Major conferences:	None
Ship/station/area To which deployed:	Northern Arabian Gulf (04SEP-21NOV) North Arabian Sea (22NOV-12DEC)
Changes in operational Command:	Commander 3 <sup>rd</sup> Fleet Commander, Task Group 30.6 Commander 7 <sup>th</sup> Fleet Commander, Task Group 70.6 Commander 5 <sup>th</sup> Fleet Commander, Task Group 50.6
Major accidents involving Loss of life or equipment:	None

### **3. Narrative**

Equipped with the AN/SPY 1A phased array radar, the AEGIS Combat System, and the MK41 Vertical Launch System firing the SM-2 missile, ANTIETAM is the Navy's premier Air Warfare platform. These systems, combined with the AEGIS display System, a vast array of communication systems including JTIDS Link 16, automatic status boards, and seventeen NTDS consoles, make her Command and Control capabilities second to none in supporting a Battle Group Warfare Commander. ANTIETAM is also equipped with the AN/SQS-53A sonar, AN/SQS-19 towed array sonar, and the LAMPS Mk III helicopter giving her unmatched ability to perform both long and short range Undersea Warfare. Two 5"54 caliber MK 45 guns guided by the MK 86 Gun Fire Control System provide a powerful Naval Gun Fire Support capability and augment the Harpoon Weapon System in the role of Surface Warfare. Finally, the Tomahawk Weapon System provides Strike Warfare capabilities allowing ANTIETAM to engage both land and sea targets "over the horizon" with deadly accuracy.

#### **2001**

2001 was an impressive year for the officers and crew of ANTIETAM. Beginning with the three-week long intensive pre-deployment workup COMPTUEX in February, the year of 2001 would find ANTIETAM operating at a continuous high tempo. COMPTUEX represented the first time that ANTIETAM operated with the other ships in the USS CARL VINSON (CVN-70) battle group with which she would be deploying.

In April ANTIETAM went through INSURV and successfully completed both the underway portion and the open and inspect phase. The inspection is a comprehensive review mandated by Congress to ensure that all Navy ships are properly maintained. It also serves to identify any problems that could limit a ship's ability to continue in service for the length of its intended life span.

On 07 May Captain Leo J. Quilici, II turned command of USS ANTIETAM over to Captain Richard T. Rushton. This ceremony was performed at sea with all personnel attending in dress white uniform. Captain Rushton is a graduate of the University of Florida where he was commissioned through the Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps. Prior to reporting aboard ANTIETAM Captain Rushton served as the commanding officer of USS YORKTOWN (CG-48) and most recently as Chief for Command, Control, Communications, and Computers Plans and Policy, U.S. Joint Forces Command, Norfolk, VA. Captain Rushton is married and has two grown children.

The intensive work up schedule continued in May with ANTIETAM's participation in JTFX. This exercise challenged ANTIETAM and all of the ships in the CARL VINSON battle group with numerous scenarios and a round the clock final battle problem.

ANTIETAM deployed as part of the CARL VINSON battle group on 26 July. The first stop of the deployment was Lualualei, Hawaii, home of Pearl Harbor's Naval Magazine where ANTIETAM completed her ammunition onload with the addition of Tomahawk Land Attack Cruise Missiles.

Following the brief stop ANTIETAM proceeded across the Pacific to Singapore for its first liberty port. On the way ANTIETAM participated in a PASSEX with the Royal Singaporean Navy. Following the port visit to Singapore, ANTIETAM proceeded directly to Phuket, Thailand for another port visit.

ANTIETAM departed Phuket on 03 Sep and was transiting with the CARL VINSON battle group to the Arabian Gulf when the 11 Sep terrorist attacks on the United States took place. The battle group immediately took station in the North Arabian Sea, prepared for action. On 15 Sep ANTIETAM and USS O'KANE were detached to transit through the Strait of Hormuz to conduct Maritime Interdiction Operations (MIO) in the North Arabian Gulf, enforcing United Nations sanctions imposed on Iraq. MIO was a very intensive mission involving the combined efforts of every ANTIETAM crewmember. ANTIETAM's two Visit, Board, Search and Seizure (VBSS) teams inspected over 125 vessels for contraband oil and other cargo entering or leaving Iraq. All hands were involved whether guarding, monitoring or escorting diverted vessels, making box lunches for the numerous personnel off the ship, operating small boats, or maintaining and flying the ship's two helicopters.

ANTIETAM was designated to provide air defense for the annual meeting of the World Trade Organization held in Quatar in November. During this time ANTIETAM operated in a Modified Location box with the PELIELU Amphibious Ready Group.

ANTIETAM was detached to proceed to the North Arabian Sea in support of OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) on 17 Nov. During the transit through the Strait of Hormuz ANTIETAM was turned around to assist with the Search and Rescue (SAR) efforts as a result of the loss of two crewmembers from USS PETERSON. ANTIETAM participated in the unsuccessful SAR operations for two days before once again transiting the Strait of Hormuz. While assigned to OEF duties ANTIETAM participated in Al Qaida and Taliban fugitive Maritime Interdiction Operations, executed Red Crown duties, and was assigned as USS CARL VINSON's escort.

On 15 Dec ANTIETAM and O'KANE were sent to Mumbai, India as the centerpiece of a US Pacific Command initiative to improve relations with India. The port visit was a significant public relations event and received a great deal of positive media coverage in India. ANTIETAM was open for tours during the entire port visit and hosted a large press conference on the date of her arrival. ANTIETAM was also host to a party for Indian Naval representatives and other VIPs on the last night of the visit.

ANTIETAM departed India and proceeded to Singapore on 18 Dec. The crew celebrated Christmas in port Singapore before getting underway enroute Hawaii.

The year of 2001 for USS ANTIETAM was highlighted by WESTPAC 2001, the tragic events of 11 Sep, and the beginnings of OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM. All ANTIETAM crewmembers are proud of the fact that ANTIETAM was on station when needed by her nation, and that the ship and crew expertly executed a key role in the war on terrorism.



The year also brought about new and innovative methods of keeping crewmembers, family members, and loved ones continuously informed of ANTIETAM's actions. This was accomplished by enhancing ANTIETAM's quarterly "Family-Gram", establishing on and off-ship websites with ship's information, and through "Viper Alerts", regular emails direct from Captain Rushton to loved ones and family members. These improvements were a huge success during the deployment and the uncertain days following 11 Sep, when many were desperate for news. Several of these "Viper Alerts" are attached and provide a first hand account of ANTIETAM's deployment actions.

## **Viper Alerts, WESTPAC 2001**

### **001**

Test

### **002**

Blank

### **002a**

Friends,

Viper Alert 002 got away before the message was inserted. But here it is now.

Antietam has begun her long awaited WestPac deployment. Despite the sadness of departing, the excitement of the work and challenges that are ahead encourage all of us to do our best.

The Website is back up -[www.cg54.navy.mil](http://www.cg54.navy.mil)- check it out soon, and follow our updates as Antietam continues her important service to our nation.

This Alert has gone out to all the crew members of Antietam as a reminder; if you haven't gotten your family e-mail address into the Viper Alert system, please send it in now. Just hit reply on this message, and get it back to us.

Best wishes to all our families. Please take care.

### **003 July 27, 2001**

This was a ViperNest Announcement sent by mistake

### **004 July 27, 2001**

Please disregard Viper Alert 003. That information went out by mistake.

Thank you.

Chaplain Phil King

### **005 Aug. 1, 2001**

All

Greetings from the Eastern Pacific. We are about 500 nautical miles north east of the Hawaiian Islands. We will be calling at Pearl Harbor briefly on Thursday and Friday, August 2-3. We have just updated the public website [www.cg54.navy.mil](http://www.cg54.navy.mil) with pictures and some information highlighting our departure from homeport in San Diego and a Burial at Sea Ceremony the crew participated in. Check it out! We will send another alert on arrival in Pearl Harbor with the ship's telephone numbers and contact information.

**006(a) Aug. 2, 2001**

This is being sent out from San Diego on behalf of the USS ANTIETAM...

Greetings Family and Friends,

The USS ANTIETAM has arrived in Hawaii and is in the midst of an onload of supplies. During the time the ship is in Hawaii, the e-mail system will be down. It is anticipated that it will be back up on Friday, August 3 at 2200 (that's 10:00 PM) Pacific Daylight time. In the interim, please find the ship's phone numbers listed below:

Ship's Office/Fax/ Command 808-474-1456

Thank you for your patience with the e-mail system.

**006(b) Aug. 3, 2001**

ANTIETAM WEBSITE ACCESS CLOSED

Use the following verbatim:

Access to USS ANTIETAM's Internet Website has been closed by the Navy's Network Operations Center to protect it and other Navy Websites from an active computer virus attack. Site access will be restored as soon as effective anti-virus conditions are established. We will notify you as soon as that occurs. Expect to hear within 7-10 days.

Wr/CO

**007 Aug 5, 2001**

Good afternoon from ANTIETAM. Some of you may have already heard that the ship had a fairly significant fire yesterday morning. It occurred in an unmanned space that surrounds the exhaust stacks for the aft engine room. I am happy to report there were NO INJURIES, even minor, and our ship's Rapid Response and Flex Teams performed admirably in combating and extinguishing the fire. While events like these are always a source of concern for families, be reassured that the damage was primarily cosmetic, and ANTIETAM continues to support the Battle Group at FULL READINESS.

R/  
CO

**008 Aug. 13, 2001**

The Navy's Network Operations Center continues to work on protection software to defend against the "Red Worm" virus. Until this work is complete public access remains closed to ANTIETAM's Web Site, along most other Department of the Navy Sites. We are checking daily for status. As soon as access is re-established. We will send out another Alert. In the meantime, we continue our journey westward with the CARL VINSON Battle Group. We passed Saipan a few days ago and entered the Philippine Sea, the site of intense Naval Battle in World

War II named for it. Many of you may remember it as the "Marianna's Turkey Shoot." It was the last battle that the Imperial Japanese Navy was able to muster a formidable Carrier Force. The upcoming week is filled with training exercises and shipboard drills as we hone our skills for operations in the Seventh and Fifth Fleets. Stay tuned for a Web Site Update.

Wr/CO

**009 Aug 19, 2001**

All,

Greetings from the South China Sea. This is the first of what I hope will be weekly updates to our ANTIETAM families to keep you apprised of our activities during the deployment. We are presently west of the Philippine Archipelago near the southern tip of Viet Nam headed for the first of our two Liberty Ports in the Seventh Fleet Area of Operations; Singapore. We have been busy getting the VINSON Battle Group AirWing fully qualified in all of the many contingency operations they may have to execute in both the Seventh Fleet and Fifth Fleet Areas of Operations. It has been a very challenging schedule for the Operation's Specialists and Officers especially, ending in a days worth of simulated combat operations with the CONSTELLATION BATTLE GROUP as they passed us on their way home. The rest of the crew has been hard at work just keeping up with all of the moving parts of a complex Warship and participating in the steady stream of shipboard drills and training evolutions that keep the razor's edge on our ability to meet any task that might come our way.

An added challenge the past several days has been the weather. It is the Summer Monsoon season in the South China Sea. We have had to deal with consistent 20-30 knot winds and seas running 10 to 15 feet in wave height. Most of have dealt with the very dynamic environment of a moving ship well. If you can imagine living in a room that rocks back and forth about 5-6 degrees and moves up and down 1 to 2 ft at irregular intervals, then you can get a feel for the daily challenge your ANTIETAM crewmember faces in doing just the simple things like eating, showering, or reading a book. The good news is the weather is starting to abate and the forecast shows rapidly improving conditions. Yes, there have been some green faces. However, I assure you our Chief Corpsman (Medic) has been keeping a close watch on those of us who are "motion challenged." All are on the mend as of this morning:-)

Our shedule is holding nicely. You can expect us to pull into Singapore right on the time schedule we left you on our departure. Most of you should be aware that we are planning a Family Video Teleconferencing Party on the 22nd of August at 6:00PM your time. We will be greeting you from the next day or the 23rd of August at 0900. I expect email to be stable during the inport period so you should be able to keep contact with your crewmember without interruption. There are also a host of U.S. Navy facilities in Singapore, to include phone exchange and a recreation complex. There will be plenty for the crew to keep themselves occupied.

Many of you may have heard recent reports in the news about the rise in terrorism throughout the world, targeted at American's in general and American Servicemen specifically. I want to assure you we are taking the general threat seriously and have put in place significant protective measures for our shore parties while we are on the beach in foreign ports. Singapore is recognized as one of the safest foreign ports in which we call. I have just reviewed the threat assessment from our intelligence and counter-terrorist support teams and there is no indication of terrorist activity associated with Singapore. We intend to have a safe and enjoyable time! See you at the VTC.

Warm regards/CAPT R.T. Rushton, USN, Commanding Officer

10 **Aug. 20**

I am happy to report that ANTIETAM's Internet Website is now accessible. It is [www.cg54.navy.mil](http://www.cg54.navy.mil) for those who haven't had a chance to see it yet. For those who have, we have updated several of the areas. Most notable are a new improved History site, and several new items under the crew site. We will be adding some items from the transit to WESTPAC shortly.

Warm regards/CAPT R.T. Rushton, USN

**011Aug. 21, 2001**

ANTIETAM has arrived in Singapore. We will be here through Saturday, 25 August. We are moored at the British Royal Navy Facility at Sembawang, just north of the city. There is a small U.S. Navy establishment here that includes recreation facilities, a Navy Exchange, and Enlisted Club. There is also a Cyber Cafe that is free for our Crewmen. It will be a nice break after almost a month of hard work. For all, you can expect your crewman to have his regular email access throughout the Port Visit. For those of you who have signed up for the Family Support Group VTC, it is ready to go. The response has been great with some 75 families signed up. See you there.

Warm regards/CAPT R. T. Rushton, USN/ Commanding Officer

**012Aug. 26**

Greetings from the Malacca Strait, just west of Singapore. For those of you that are tracking our progress using the San Diego Union Tribune chart, we are in the bottom right corner of J15. I'm happy to report that we had an enjoyable and safe port visit in Singapore. We are now headed west toward the Indian Ocean. We will be making our second port call of the deployment at a small city on the southern extremity of Thailand called Phuket, in route. Our arrival will be late morning (our time-about midnight West Coast time) on Tuesday, 28 August. We will remain in port until the morning of Tuesday, 4 Sep (remember, we are a day ahead of you). The ship will be at anchor for the entire visit, so the Liberty Parties will be getting ashore using contracted boats. Although there are no US Base facilities in Phuket, it is a major vacation spot in South East Asia. As a result, there is ample access to international telephone lines. We will also maintain our normal email connectivity.

If you have tried to get on ANTIETAM's Website in the past week or so and failed, it is because the Navy Operations Center has again taken it, along with other Ship Websites down in the seemingly never ending saga of virus attacks. This time we were not notified, so were unable to warn you. I regret any inconvenience or frustration it might have caused. We will notify you as soon as it is available again.

All for now! For those of you that participated in the Family Video Teleconference this past week, I hope you had as much fun as I did. For planning purposes, we are planning on doing another one in early to mid December. It will likely be during our last call into Bahrain before we start our transit

home. We will start advanced planning and promulgate dates as soon as we have them firm.

Warm regards/CAPT R.T. Rushton, USN/CO

013 Aug.

Friends and Families of ANTIETAM,

We are safely anchored about 1000 yards from the beach in Phuket Thailand. We will be here through the morning of the 4th of September. (That will be the evening of the 3rd for most of you). You can expect your ANTIETAM crew member to have access to his normal email throughout the visit except for short periods where we have to bring down satellite communications to rig our anchor and friendship lights:-). The crew will also have access to international commercial phone service on the beach at their own expense.

Warm regards/CAPT R.T. Rushton, USN/CO

014 Sep. 4

Greetings All,

I am happy to report that we are underway from Phuket Thailand with everyone safely on board. It was a very enjoyable port visit in an enchanting land. There are some sunburns to deal with and few who are shaking off a last good evening before liberty expired last night at midnight, but no serious injuries. We are now turning to the serious business of the final training period with the Battle Group as we transit to the Arabian Gulf. This coming week has us supporting Carrier Air Wing operations with USS CARL VINSON and working on our own shipboard internal skills to get them back up to speed after just under a week in port.

We have gotten word recently that the ANTIETAM Website is again available. We will be posting some new information and pictures from both Singapore and Phuket on it in the next several days. As soon as we verify that they are posted, I will send you a notice so you can check for some familiar faces. All for now. Hope all is going well on the home front.

Warm regards/CAPT R.T. Rushton, USN/CO

014 (015) Sep. 8, 2001

All, We have just been informed that the Navy Network Operation Center is experiencing difficulty in routing email to ships at sea. They are working to restore full service. We do not have an estimated time that will take. Will send a Viper Alert when it is corrected.

Warm regards/CAPT R.T. Rushton, USN

015 Sep. 9, 2001

Greetings from the Indian Ocean.

We are presently about 170 nautical miles due east of the southern tip of India. For those of you who are following our progress using the San Diego Tribune Tracking chart, we are in the upper left corner of box "I -10." The crew has been very busy this week working on returning our Battle Group operational skills to a proficient level after two very exciting port visits. We are also in the full swing of getting ready to enter the Arabian Gulf and the U.S. Fifth Fleet area of operations where we will go immediately into a mission supporting UN Sanctions governing Iraq. The major part of this operation leans on our responsibility to support maritime interdiction of prohibited cargo like weapons and materials that can be used by the Iraqi regime to re-arm the Iraqi Armed Forces or suppress the Iraqi people. We are also charged with preventing the unlawful export of oil from Iraqi facilities. These operations require us to Visit, Board, and Search all inbound and outbound vessels to Iraqi ports in the Arabian Gulf as well as we must maintain security for vessels that have been determined to be carrying illicit cargos in the UN holding area.

ANTIETAM's schedule has us going directly into maritime interdiction operations on the 15th of September. We will be relieved to proceed to the U.S. Naval Facility at Bahrain about the 21st of Sep. We presently expect to be in there for several days. Your crew member will have access to international telephone services there as well as you can expect he will have access to email as usual. Remember, ship's operational schedules are subject to change and do often in this area of the world. If that happens, we will be sure to send a Viper Net Alert so you know what to expect.

Email traffic to ANTIETAM remains degraded at present. The Navy's Network Operations Center is working on the problem. I expect it will be solved in the next day or so. The effect is that we are only getting some intermittent emails from the beach. Our traffic to you appears to be unaffected. If you haven't received a response from your crew member on a recent email, it is likely that he/she hasn't received it yet. Additionally, you can expect an email outage for day or two starting on the 12th of Sep when we shift over to the Indian Ocean communications satellites. We will send out a Viper Alert when we know we are back up after the shift.

Family Support Group News. We have had some recent changes to our Family Support Group Executive Committee. It has required us to change the email address for you to contact the FSG. It is now:

fsgcoordinator2@hotmail.com. It is the contact point to use if you have questions regarding upcoming FSG events or if you wish to volunteer to help in the myriad of FSG projects that support the extended ANTIETAM family.

That is all for the present. Be assured that your ANTIETAM crew member is doing an outstanding job out here. It is a challenging time to be sure, but it is what we have trained hard to do for these past many months. Hope all is going well at home.

Warm regards/CAPT R.T. Rushton, USN/CO

016 Sep. 9, 2001

All,

We have received word from the Navy Network Operations Center that full email service has been restored to the ship. However, it appears email sent in the past three days from "hotmail" and "yahoo" addresses especially were lost. If you are a "hotmail" or "yahoo" subscriber and sent an email to your ANTIETAM crew member in the past several days, please send it again. For those of you who are subscribed to other internet providers like AOL, COMPUSERVE, etc. and suspect your email did not make it because you have received no response, I would recommend that you send it again as well. We aren't positive that there weren't others that got lost during the outage. I'm sorry for the inconvenience.

**Remember, we will be shift from the Pacific to the Indian Ocean Communications Satellites on the 12th of Sep. We may loose email for a couple of days when that happens. I will send you another Viper Net Alert when we are sure our connections are solid again.**

Warm regards/CAPT R.T. Rushton, USN/CO

017 Sep. 11, 2001

World Trade Center Destroyed/ Pentagon Bombed

All,

I'm sad to report that all US ships at sea have been directed to cease all non-official email traffic effective immediately. Order is being given for operational reasons. I can tell that everyone in ANTIETAM is doing fine as we enter the U.S. Fifth Fleet Operationg Area. I will send you a Viper Net Alert as soon as authority to resume is granted. In the interim, U.S. Mail should still be active.

Warm regards/CAPT R.T. Rushton, USN/CO

018 Sep. 13, 2001

**OPERATIONAL SECURITY RULES REMAIN IN EFFECT. ROUTINE EMAIL TRAFFIC REMAINS RESTRICTED TO ALL U.S. NAVAL FORCES AT SEA. THIS COMMUNICATION HAS BEEN RELEASED WITH SPECIFIC COMMANDING OFFICER APPROVAL. INDIVIDUAL EMAIL COMMUNICATION FROM CREW MEMBERS IS NOT YET AUTHORIZED.**

ALL,

ANTIETAM is presently on her assigned station in the Indian Ocean. I want to assure our families that everyone here is safe at present, spirits are high, and we all stand ready to do our duty during this current National crisis. The ship's in the VINSON Battle Group are in a routine defensive posture for this area of the world. That means that we have our main self defense weapon systems in full readiness condition and we are ever vigilant to any potential threat. At present there is very little potential of an attack on Battle Group assets.

The restricted flow of email traffic from the ships is part of an essential operational security condition that must be enforced whenever tactical operations are probable. The present restrictions do not hamper unclassified email and



internet information from coming to the ship. It only restricts outbound email traffic and web operations. In short, your emails to the ship will come through and into your crew member's email account. He/she will be unable to answer them. U.S. Navy leadership understands the strain this information restriction places on our sailors and families. The policy will remain in effect only as long as the operational security implications of our present assignment requires. It is a matter of constant review by the U.S. Fifth Fleet Commander. At present, I can't give you an estimate as to how long it will last, but be assured we will endeavour to keep it as short as possible.

In the interim, I would encourage you to continue to send emails so your crew member can keep up with events at home. I will provide periodic updates as to our status within the constraints of our operations. I have attached a picture of ANTIETAM from yesterday's refueling operations. You will note the "Battle Flag" flown by ANTIETAM and every combatant ship as they went alongside the replenishment ship in a show of support for those Americans who lost their lives or were injured in the recent attacks against America.

Warm regards/CAPT R.T. Rushton, USN/CO



ANTIETAM.jpg

**019 Sep. 16, 2001**

All,

ANTIETAM has arrived on station in the Northern Arabian Gulf. For those of you who are tracking our position using the San Diego Union's deployment tracking chart, we are in boxes E4 and E5. We transited into the Gulf via the Strait of Hormuz last evening and I expect we will remain on station here for some time. Our primary mission is to support Maritime Interdiction and Inspection of maritime traffic going to and from Iraq. This mission is part of our responsibility as assigned by the United Nations to prevent Iraq from building up her Armed Forces to a level that could again threaten her neighbors and to keep her from developing weapons of mass destruction. As you might expect, we are also on a short tether to respond to national tasking vis-à-vis the ongoing national crisis. As I reported in my last communication, everyone in ANTIETAM remains in good spirits and ready to do what is required. Your troops are doing a great job out here and are ready for just about any contingency.

I am also very happy to report we have been authorized to resume full email operations for the crew. You should start getting emails from them very soon. As you can expect, there are some operational security restrictions that they must adhere to, but I'm sure there will be plenty for them to share with you within those rules. While I am on that subject, I need to remind you that email is an easy medium to intercept and read. There are plenty of hackers out there world wide that can intercept your emails, read them, and in some cases alter

them. You need to think of email the same way you think of a two way radio where anyone can ease drop on your conversation. As I believe the President has been very eloquent in stating in his recent addresses, the United States is shifting to war footing to counter this terrorist threat. These terrorist organizations are very well organized and capable of very sophisticated operations, to include gathering intelligence via the internet, ease dropping on telephone and cell phone lines. We all need to be vigilant to keep our troops and our citizens safe. I truly appreciate your support as we prepare for the future in this regard.

ANTIETAM's Website ([www.cg54.navy.mil](http://www.cg54.navy.mil)) has just been updated with some new pictures and information regarding our experiences on the deployment. I especially would like to draw your attention to items accessed under the "crew" button as well as a new "division highlights." The Division highlighted this month is CA Division, or as we call them, the "Sonar Gang." There is also a new picture in the photo gallery of our Chief Petty Officer's Mess. It was taken at sunrise on a recent morning when we promoted 5 outstanding Petty Officers to Chief. Enjoy them.

All for now! As always, we will let you know as time critical information requires and I will continue to update you as to our condition weekly via the Viper Net Alert. Please be assured that your ANTIETAM crew member is safe, well trained, and prepared.

Warm regards/CAPT R.T. Rushton, USN/CO

**020 Sep. 18 2001**

All,

The Ombudsman and ANTIETAM Family Support Group Board Members have heard from many people requesting a local gathering of ANTIETAM family and friends where we can come and share time together in light of last week's tragic events.

On Sunday, September 23, 2001 from 3:00 PM until dusk, we've made arrangements to meet at Spreckles Park in Coronado. Spreckles Park is located directly across from the Coronado City Library and is bordered by 6th Street, 7th Street, Orange Avenue and C street. To get there, cross the Coronado Bridge (Toll is \$1.00, but if you have more than one person in your vehicle, use the carpool lanes, in which case there is no toll). The road leading into Coronado is CA-75. This road will veer slightly to the right and become a one way street, 3rd street/CA-282W. Turn Left on Orange Avenue (CA-75) and go 3 1/2 blocks. Spreckles Park will be to your left. There is a nice playground there for children, but you may want to bring blanket or chairs as seating is limited.

If you'd also like to bring a candle, towards the end of the afternoon, we'll be

lighting candles in memory of the lives that have been lost, and in support of our military. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us by e-mail at FSGCoordinator2@hotmail.com or by phone on the Careline at (619) 687-7961.

Peace and Blessings to you all....

The Antietam Family Support Group Planning Board

021 Sep. 19, 2001

**ALL OUTBOUND EMAIL HAS BEEN TERMINATED FOR SHIPS IN THE 5TH FLEET AREA FOR OPERATIONAL SECURITY REASONS. THIS EMAIL HAS BEEN SPECIFICALLY APPROVED FOR RELEASE BY THE COMMANDING OFFICER. INDIVIDUAL EMAIL FROM CREWMEMBERS IS NOT PRESENTLY AUTHORIZED.**

All,

Unfortunately, all outbound email from ships in the Fifth Fleet Operating Area has been secured again for Operational Security Reasons. As before, your ANTIETAM crew member will continue to receive any emails you send, but he/she will be unable to respond until the present restriction is lifted. I do not yet have an estimate as to how long that will be. We will let you know the moment it does. Be assured that we are doing great out here. The whole crew is working hard to meet a host of operational missions. Safety of our crew remains the most important consideration we apply in all that we do. Hope all is well on the home front. As always I will try to keep you updated within the constraints of our operational security requirements.

Warm regards/CAPT R.T. Rushton, USN/CO

022 Sep. 21 2001

Good Morning All,

Restrictions placed on normal outbound email from ANTIETAM have been lifted by Commander U.S. Fifth Fleet. ANTIETAM crew members have resumed outbound email operations. As before, there are Operational Security rules they must follow. During this National Crisis we may be in out of these restricted periods often. They do not correlate to any specific event ANTIETAM is participating in, but are rather a requirement for theater wide operations. The crew is working hard and meeting all tasking. Our safety and security remain unchanged from my last report.

Warm regards/CAPT R.T. Rushton, USN/CO

023 Sep. 23, 2001

**ALL OUTBOUND EMAIL HAS BEEN TERMINATED FOR SHIPS IN THE 5TH FLEET AREA FOR OPERATIONAL SECURITY REASONS. THIS EMAIL HAS BEEN SPECIFICALLY APPROVED FOR RELEASE BY THE COMMANDING OFFICER. INDIVIDUAL EMAIL TO CREWMEMBERS IS NOT PRESENTLY AUTHORIZED.**

All,

I apologize for my weekly report to you being a day late. The pace of operations the last three days has been challenging. ANTIETAM remains in the Northern Arabian Gulf in her assigned Maritime Interdiction Operation role. As I write this, we are the UN Holding Area Guard Ship. As such we are responsible for inspecting all cargo vessels going into and out of Iraq to make sure they are in compliance with active UN mandates. We also are providing security for a group of detained vessels that have been apprehended by the Multi-national Force in the area, because they were carrying unauthorized cargos of Iraqi Oil. It is hard work for the crew in 105 deg heat. Today we have almost 100 shipmates on various teams inspecting cargo, providing Health and Comfort inspections for the detained vessels and 24 hour security for several detained vessels who are known bad actors. We also have a detachment of 12 crewmen who are providing security for several diverted vessels enroute to a southern Gulf port for illegal cargo offload. The troops are doing a great job, although many of us are doing things that aren't in anyone's rate description.

Overlaid on our Maritime Interdiction Work, we are providing air defense command and control for the Arabian Gulf and are at the ready for contingency plans related to the ongoing crisis. The bottom line is time flies out here because we are very busy. ANTIETAM's leadership and medical staff are monitoring things like making sure all of the Teams are properly provisioned, fed, and most importantly hydrated for this type of work.

**Just got word an hour ago that we have again been placed in a restricted email status.** The rules are the same as previous periods. Your crew member will be able to receive your emails, but will be unable to respond. This restriction has nothing to do with ANTIETAM's immediate situation. It is a theater wide action related to operational security.

That is all for the present. Please be assured that we are doing fine out here. The mission we are executing is a critical one to U.S. security and contributory to the defensive posture demanded by the recent attacks on the United States. We are proud to be doing our duty. Most importantly, we are going to do so as safely as possible. ANTIETAM's defensive systems are at the ready and in excellent condition. They are maintained by the finest group of American sailors one could ask for. I am extremely proud of them and hope you are too.

All the best! Hope things are going well at home.

Warm regards/CAPT R.T. Rushton, USN

024 Sep. 24, 2001

**ALL OUTBOUND EMAIL HAS BEEN TERMINATED FOR SHIPS IN THE 5TH FLEET AREA FOR OPERATIONAL SECURITY REASONS. THIS EMAIL HAS BEEN SPECIFICALLY APPROVED FOR RELEASE BY THE COMMANDING OFFICER. INDIVIDUAL EMAIL FROM CREWMEMBERS IS NOT PRESENTLY AUTHORIZED.**

All,

Sorry. The warning header in Viper Alert 023 was misworded. ANTIETAM Crew members can receive emails as always. The restriction is solely on the outbound or send side. Keep those emails coming. We are as hungry for information from home as I'm sure you are to here from your crew member here. Will be more clear in the future.

Warm regards/CAPT R.T. Rushton, USN

025 Sep. 28, 2001

All,

Normal email traffic has been restored to all ships in the 5th Fleet operating area. ANTIETAM crewmembers can again send email subject to operational security guidance that remains in place.

Warm regards/CAPT R.T. Rushton, USN/CO

026 Sep. 30 2001

All,

We have completed another week of fast paced operations here in the Northern Arabian Gulf. Our day to day mission remains unchanged from what I reported last week. We are conducting Maritime Interception Operations in support of the UN Sanctions governing Iraq. This week we conducted over 50 merchant ship boardings for vessels that had UN authorization to move goods to and from Iraq. These ships have to be inspected from top to bottom to insure the cargo they are carrying is in full compliance with UN mandates for authorized imports and exports. We also worked with other forces in the area to capture 6 vessels that were trying to evade inspection and were found to be smuggling Iraqi oil illegally. Once captured they are held in a UN designated anchorage here in the NAG and we are required to provide security and see to their health and comfort needs. About 70 ANTIETAM crew members are engaged daily in

this effort beyond our normal shipboard duties. It keeps us all busy. I can assure you our crew is very well trained and equipped to execute all of these operations.

I had the distinct pleasure of attending the reenlistments of 8 of our shipmates this week, in sight of the Iraqi mainland, as they decided to continue in the service of their country. They are GM1 Varabkanish, STG2 Roske, FC2 Warwick, FC2 Eldridge, FC3 Hartman, FC3 Howe, CTR1 Kitt, and EN2 Rachford. It is not an easy decision to be sure. It requires a commitment to serve one's country under arduous conditions, with long periods of separation, unstable schedules, and for a modest salary in comparison to most civilian occupations. I am extremely proud of each of them and hope you are too.

We updated the ANTIETAM public website this week as well. For those of you who may not have accessed it yet, the address is [www.cg54.navy.mil](http://www.cg54.navy.mil). Look for "Swim Call" under the Crew button, some new additions to the Photo Gallery, and under the Links/Family button there are some links to other information. We should be posting displays on our port visits in the next week or so and look for picture displays on the Air Det, and Visit Board Search and Seizure ops in the near future.

All for now. Be assured that we remain in a full ready condition for any contingency the National Command Authority requires of us and we have all of our defensive systems ready to react. Our best wishes remain with our families and friends back home.

Warm regards/CAPT R.T. Rushton, USN/CO

027 Oct. 6, 2001

**ALL OUTBOUND EMAIL HAS BEEN TERMINATED FOR SHIPS IN THE 5TH FLEET AREA FOR OPERATIONAL SECURITY REASONS. THIS EMAIL HAS BEEN SPECIFICALLY APPROVED FOR RELEASE BY THE COMMANDING OFFICER. INDIVIDUAL EMAIL FROM CREWMEMBERS IS NOT PRESENTLY AUTHORIZED.**

All,

ANTIETAM has again been placed in a restricted email status along with all of the units in the 5th Fleet Operating area. As before, ANTIETAM crew members can continue to receive email, but will be unable to respond with outgoing email until further notice. As before, we will notify you as soon as the present restrictions are lifted. Be assured that these restrictions may not be directly related to activities that ANTIETAM is involved in.

Warm regards/CAPT R.T. Rushton, USN/CO

028 Oct.8, 2001

**ALL OUTBOUND EMAIL HAS BEEN TERMINATED FOR SHIPS IN THE 5TH FLEET AREA FOR OPERATIONAL SECURITY REASONS. THIS EMAIL HAS BEEN SPECIFICALLY APPROVED FOR RELEASE BY THE COMMANDING OFFICER. INDIVIDUAL EMAIL FROM CREWMEMBERS IS NOT PRESENTLY AUTHORIZED.**

All,

As you have likely noticed from the news, combat operations have commenced in earnest. The 5th Fleet Battle Force will busy for the time being. ANTIETAM is attached to the Battle Force, but we are 900 miles from where the major operations are underway. We remain in the Northern Arabian Gulf executing the UN mission of Maritime Interdiction Operations. The impact to us is to be more vigilant for potential terrorist activity as the Arab world reacts to the operations. Be assured we are closely monitoring the situation. ANTIETAM is a safe place to be right now.

Warm regards/CAPT R.T. Rushton, USN/CO

029 Oct. 14, 2001

All,

We are into our third consecutive week as the UN Guardship in support of the Maritime Interdiction Operation against Iraq. It is steady grinding work for our Visit, Board, Search, and Seizure (VBSS) Teams, Security Details, and Health and Comfort Squads. We have been doing an average of 4 boardings a day to inspect legitimate cargo vessels bound for or coming from the main Iraqi port of Ummn Kasar. In addition, we have 10 illegitimate oil carrying vessels in the holding area, including 3 that were apprehended in the past several days by our Battle Group mate, USS OKANE, and two Allied ships that are in support. Those vessels require around the clock security and special VBSS Team handling because of the strict Evidence Package requirements imposed by the UN.

The Battle Force operations you are hearing about in the news continue to go well. We are actually over 800 nautical miles from that activity at present. As I mentioned before, the impact of ongoing offensive operations on us is the heightened awareness that is required to prevent terrorist attacks on ANTIETAM. We have all of the conditions in place to support that awareness and practice our responses often to be sure we are ready.

In the daily pace of operations, we have over 40 crewmembers on full time security detail, 24 folks on the Blue and Gold VBSS teams, and 15 guys tied up in running the boats and keeping logistics flowing across the fantail and into the boats. The Mess Management Specialists (MS) in the Galley prepare over 100 box lunches and snacks every day to keep the security teams fed as well as the many helos that bring spare parts etc. As you can imagine, the ship's laundry also runs nearly around the clock since most of these vessels are pretty filthy. All of the things mentioned go on in addition to our normal operating requirements of maintaining all of the complex equipment in ANTIETAM, executing our responsibilities as the Arabian Gulf Air Defense Commander, and being prepared for the Joint Chiefs of Staff Response Options that ANTIETAM Strike teams must be ready for on less than an hour's notice. In short, your crewmember is working pretty hard. Most of them are putting in 14-16 hours a day at keeping up with their responsibilities. It is hard work. I am extremely proud of the way they have all risen to the challenge.

I want to pass on for all ANTIETAM crew members that we hope all is going well at home. We are getting some news about new security measures in the States as well as the continued concern over new terrorist activity. It is a concern to all of us. Those emails and letters from all of you are important to us to know you all are safe and well. Keep them coming. Until next week, All the best.

Warm regards/CAPT R.T. Rushton, USN/CO

030 Oct. 17, 2001

All,

I know it is hard to believe, but if our schedule holds, we are approaching the half way point of the cruise. In honor of that anniversary, the Family Support Group is sponsoring a Halloween/Halfway Potluck. All ANTIETAM families are cordially invited to attend. It should be great fun with a chance to talk about the cruise challenges, have great fun with the kids, and watch a recent video produced by the ship to support it. The ship had its Halloween party early just so we could get it filmed and the VIDEO transported home in time for this FSG sponsored event. I think you will enjoy seeing your ANTIETAM crew member even if it is video a couple of weeks old and I know there are several crew members who provided special messages to their spouses, significant others, etc. With a little luck and the help of our able ANTIETAM Chaplain, LT King, we will be able to provide some names soon for those who may have a special message.

RSVP's Needed

The Halloween/Halfway Potluck Party hosted by the Antietam Family Support Group is going to be held at the downtown San Diego USO from 4:30 PM-8:30 PM on Sunday, October 28, 2001. If you plan to attend, please RSVP to either [cg54ombudsman@aol.com](mailto:cg54ombudsman@aol.com) or the careline at 619- 687-7961 with the number of children



that will be coming in order to adequately plan for the games and prizes that will be given away at the event. Thank you.

For those of you who are able to visit the ANTIETAM Web Page, we just posted some new items. Specifically, some pictures of our port visit to Phuket. See if you recognize everyone except the elephant.

Warm regards/CAPT R.T. Rushton, USN/CO

**031 Oct. 21, 2001**

All,

We are now in our 4th week of Maritime Interdiction Operations (MIO). As I write this, there over 80 ANTIETAM crew members engaged in various operations to support the MIO role. We have a team of 24 personnel presently supervising the steaming of 4 confirmed oil smuggling tankers from our UN Holding area here in the Northern Arabian Gulf, down to United Arab Emirates (UAE) for disposal. They are accompanied by a US Navy Sea Going Tug, USNS CATAWBA who is providing chow and place for the off watch teams to sleep. We expect them back in the next few days. Our sister ship USS OKANE and two Allied Frigates have been very successful this week, capturing 3 more suspected smugglers so our holding area anchorage is filling up again. It has given our two Visit Board Search and Seizure (VBSS) teams a couple of busy days in building the evidence packages for UN submission. In addition, they have completed another 25 boardings of legitimate cargo carriers going to and from the main Iraqi ports. Seven of the nine suspected smuggling vessels we have in the anchorage presently require around the clock security. Each ship takes two 4 man security teams to watch around the clock.

This week we will be passing the UN Guard ship duties over to OKANE and will be heading back up to a patrol area near the main Iraqi port facility to maintain a radar guard for ships coming and going. We will have a team of Naval Special Warfare forces with us to capture any suspected smugglers that we detect. Once they are secured, the special warfare team turns the ship over to an ANTIETAM Steaming Team to make the trip down to the holding area. Some of your ANTIETAM crew members will have some sea stories to tell about these trips to be sure. We maintain good cover from ANTIETAM for them as they move to the holding area. I want to assure you, our troops are well trained and professional in all of these operations. I continue to marvel at their resourcefulness in getting some these ships in running condition and moving them around. I am very proud of their efforts in this very important operation.

I am happy to report that we received confirmation from the US Pacific Fleet Commander that ANTIETAM will be home on time. The date in January we passed via the latest newsletter remains valid. We do not have a good feel yet for what we will be doing between now and then, but at least we can all hang our

hats on the fact that at we are at the halfway point in the cruise. As other details about the schedule become available, we will get them to you.

All for now! Our hearts and prayers are with all of you at home.

Warm regards/CAPT R.T. Rushton, USN/CO

**032 Oct. 29, 2001**

All,

As I write this, we are in our 55th consecutive day underway. The last time we saw land was about 41 days ago when we came through the Strait of Hormuz. To give you some perspective, there are 405 people in ANTIETAM, all within 586 feet of each other. I'm happy to say we have all, for the most part, become very good friends and shipmates:-).

We are again up on our patrol line just south of the main Iraqi Oil Terminals. We, along with our fellow Allied ships have managed to just about stop the flow of illegal oil out of Iraq by sea. To give you some idea of what this effort takes, we keep one of our 2 helicopters up between 10 and 12 hours a day doing surveillance and covering boarding teams as they converge on detected smugglers. Most of these hours are flown at night, with our flight deck crew manning up every four hours throughout the night. During the day, they are in an alert status to take off any time we get a radar track on suspect vessel. In short, our three flight crews, their supporting ground maintenance staff, and our flight deck fire teams are very busy. In the Combat Information Center, there are two 15 person watch teams that maintain the surveillance picture of all surface and air vehicles in the area of interest. These teams of Officers, Operations Specialists, and Fire Controlmen work 12 hours on watch, then must spend 2 to 3 hours doing additional routine duties every day. Those of you who have special crewmembers on these details should be extremely proud of the professionalism and efficiency with which they execute this demanding operation.

Boarding smuggler vessels on the move is challenging as you can imagine. I am happy to say that our crew does not have that mission. We have very well trained US Navy units and some Allied ones that are specifically trained to execute this intricate operation. It is made more difficult by recent smuggler trends to board up their windows and block doors so boarding teams have to breach them to get control of the vessel. However, once the vessels are secure and under control, ANTIETAM Steaming Parties board, supervise their steaming down to the UN Holding Area, and provide security. I can assure you our crew is very well trained in the Mariner skills and basic security requirements to do this safely. These teams consist of 8 crew members. Each is headed by a junior officer qualified as an Officer of the Deck in ANTIETAM, a senior enlisted engineer, and 6 security personnel, primarily from the Weapons and Operations Departments. Once in the UN Holding area, it is the job of the UN Guard Ship to take control of the vessels and build the evidence packages for submission to the UN. You will recall, ANTIETAM was the Guard ship for several weeks recently.

Nothing new to report as yet on ANTIETAM's schedule. We expect to remain in the Northern Arabian Gulf for most of the month of November at present. Because of our assignment to a variety of contingencies in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, we must stay at sea in a short notice alert condition. I prevents us from entering port in the Gulf area. **We continue to have confirmation from the Commander U.S. Pacific Fleet that we will return home on time.**

Warm regards/CAPT R.T. Rushton, USN/CO

033 Nov. 4, 2001

All,

ANTIETAM spent her 61st consecutive day underway today back serving as the UN Guard Ship for the UN Holding and Inspection Station in the Northern Arabian Gulf. It is now a very familiar task for us. We spent most of last week up in the vicinity of the KHOR AB ALLAH Waterway, or the KAA as we are now used to calling it. The KAA is the only waterway out of Iraq. Last Wednesday night, we detected a ship outbound from the KAA that was on the Office of Naval Intelligence Watch List for Vessels suspected of supporting terrorist activities. A US Navy Team successfully boarded her under ANTIETAM's direction and one of our Steaming Teams brought her down to the holding area for inspection. She is now being carefully reviewed by a naval intelligence team specifically sent here to determine if she is still involved in that type of activity. The "take down" of this vessel was a great piece of teamwork between the ship, the US Navy Non-Compliant Boarding Team, and our own SH-60B helos.

Our other significant challenge last week was brought on by unexpected weather. There is a heavy wind phenomena in the Middle East called the SHAMAL Wind. It comes up very quickly, usually from the north and roars down across the Gulf at great speed. It can go from a dead calm to 35 MPH of sustained winds in a matter of an hour or two. The Gulf is so shallow (about 125 feet deep were we are operating) that the seas build rapidly to six or eight feet, also in a matter of a couple of hours. On Thursday, we were faced with our second SHAMAL since we have been here. I'm happy to say ANTIETAM herself is not effected much by the winds, a testimony to her great construction. The much smaller smuggler vessels in the holding area, however are another story. By nights end, we had 4 ships that had slipped their anchors. Our security teams had their hands full getting them to start their engines, pull up anchors, and move to safer water. The smugglers use these events to try and make things very difficult by refusing to cooperate and even sabotaging some of their equipment, like steering and their electrical generators. I am very proud to say our troops were up to the task as usual. Virtually every department aboard ship contributes to these security teams. In one case, our Ship's Secretary, a First Class Yeoman was in the steering of one of these ships getting it working when the Master of the vessel refused. He was successful. There are similar stories of teams led by Fire Control men, Sonar Technicians, Enginemen, Signalmen etc.

Our ship's schedule situation remains unchanged from my last week's report. We will remain in the Northern Arabian Gulf for the foreseeable future. I can report, however that some of the details of the homeward bound transit are being discussed. It looks like we will be able to accommodate the "Viper Cruise" from Hawaii in about the same time frame that we had originally planned. Those of you who are planning to join us should be receiving a packet shortly. **We continue to have assurances from the Commander U.S. Pacific Fleet that we will be home on time:-)**

Warm regards/CAPT R.T. Rushton, USN/CO

034 Nov. 11, 2001

All,

On day 68 since our last port visit, we are in the Central Arabian Gulf providing Air and Surface force protection for U.S. units operating in the vicinity. It is a welcome change to daily grind of being the "Jailor" as the UN Guard Ship doing Maritime Interdiction Operations. It has also enabled us to get back to an operation for which our sailor's use their mainline skills. The air defense operation here is driven by the very difficult challenge of determining which of the thousands of commercial airliners and oil platform support helos are legitimate and which might be a threat. It has required us to adopt some innovative ideas and work closely with the civil air traffic control authorities in the region to work out procedures. The Officers, Operations Specialists and Fire Controlmen that stand watch in the Combat Information Center have been doing a great job of operating ANTIETAM's main line sensors that include the SPY-1 electronically controlled air search radar, our electronic surveillance gear that detects aircraft radar emissions, and our identification interrogation equipment. They also coordinate with other ships operating aircraft in the area, and military aircraft ground control sites to be sure we know where all of our friendly aircraft are in the airspace. ANTIETAM has 3 outstanding combat air controllers, 2 helo tactical air controllers, and several safety of flight certified air traffic controllers to take positive control of military aircraft in support of our mission requirements.

We have also been tasked with providing surface attack defense against small craft and potential terrorist vessels in the area for all U.S. and allied ships in the area. The main battery for this mission is our own LAMPS helo. They have been reconfigured and armed to provide an armed helo capability to quickly respond to any potential attack. As such, our aircrews are flying from dusk to dawn and some periods throughout the day. Flight deck fire fighting and deck control crews are on call around the clock. As always, everyone has been up to the task without complaint. They are doing a great job out here.

No change to the ship's schedule. We are still working with the Battle Group Commander to fill in the details of our missions for the remainder of the deployment. We will be home on time.

Hope all is well on the home front. You can bet we think of you often.

Warm regards/CAPT R.T. Rushton, USN/CO

035 Nov. 18, 2001

ALL OUTBOUND EMAIL HAS BEEN TERMINATED IN SUPPORT OF OPERATIONAL SECURITY. INDIVIDUAL EMAILS FROM CREWMEMBERS NOT AUTHORIZED. THIS EMAIL RELEASED ON SPECIFIC PERMISSION FROM THE COMMANDING OFFICER

All,

Today was our 75th consecutive day underway since leaving our last port of call. We spent it transiting the Arabian Gulf with the expectation of returning to the Battle Force in the North Arabian Sea and Gulf of Oman tomorrow. Just as we got to the Straits of Hormuz, we were directed to turn around and return to the familiar seas of the Northern Arabian Gulf. One of the ships that relieved us in the Maritime Interdiction Operation was involved in an incident in the early morning hours this morning, resulting in several missing personnel. We were several hundred miles away at the time. **All ANTIETAM crewmembers are safe tonight.** We are on our way back there to assist in Sea Air Rescue Operations.

As noted above, all of the ships operating in the Arabian Gulf have been placed in a restricted email condition until further notice. As before, your ANTIETAM crewmember can receive email. Until the restrictions are lifted, he/she will be unable to send any. As always, we will be sure to notify you as soon as these restrictions are lifted.

Those of you who have signed up for the Viper Cruise during ANTIETAM's return transit from Hawaii, should have received an information packet in the mail this past week. If you didn't get it, tell your crew member by email ASAP or respond to this Viper Alert so we can be sure we haven't missed anyone. You will note there is a tentative set of dates in the packet regarding the cruise. We believe it will happen on those date or dates close to them. As you can imagine, the schedule is dependent on operational commitments in these very uncertain times. We will try hard to hold to those dates so you can plan and make reservations. There is a chance you may have to change them slightly. Please keep that in mind as you make reservations. **Our return date from deployment remains unchanged from my last report.**

Warm regards/CAPT R.T. Rushton, USN/CO

037 Nov. 22, 2001

All,

This Thanksgiving Day represents day 79 since we left our last port of call. It finds us out of the Arabian Gulf for the first time in two long months. We have left our duties enforcing UN sanctions against Iraq and providing air defense for the Arabian Gulf with a sister AEGIS Air Defense Guided Missile Cruiser. We transited the Strait of Hormuz late in the day on the 20th of November and we are now on station in the North Arabian Sea, just south of a small port on the far west Pakistan coast called Gwadar. For those of you who are tracking our movements on the San Diego Union Chart, we are in the top middle portion of grid F7. Our mission is to monitor all traffic leaving a section of coastline about 25 miles long to be sure "Al Qaida" leadership does not attempt to flee Afghanistan via Pakistan, then by sea. We are operating well within the air cover of the Aircraft Carriers in the Battle Force.

I am including here ANTIETAM's Chaplain's message to the crew verbatim because I think it hits the mark on what we should be thankful for on this uniquely American holiday.

"The world changed before our eyes on September 11. Our country was attacked, fellow citizens murdered, our freedoms undermined. Standing on the line off the coast of Pakistan we may be tempted to think that we are being put out, that our mission is a waste of time, that our burden is too great to carry. Consider instead that our sacrifice connects us to the sacrifices our Pilgrim fathers and mothers made in a hostile wilderness, seeking a life that was free of the fear and tyranny our enemies today threaten to impose on their societies and our own. This year, Thanksgiving Day on ANTIETAM may be the most significant Thanksgiving Holiday of your entire life; All across the United States and the World people are thanking God for each of you, willing to stand the watch and guard the sacred liberties our ancestors prayed for centuries ago. Our ideals and values as a culture are demonstrated in Thanksgiving; and when we come together today around the tables of our ship, far from the homes and families we love, guarding a hostile shore, we understand the depth and power of gratitude as the Pilgrims understood it. Our practice today is reflected across history and human hearts in what is best in all mankind."

With that, I will close by wishing each and every member of the ANTIETAM extended family a very happy and safe Thanksgiving. Our hearts and minds are with you on this very significant day.

Warm regards/CAPT R.T. Rushton, USN/CO

038 Nov. 26, 2001

All,

Today is Sunday, the 82nd day since we left our last port of call. The sea is starting to look the same everyday:-). We have changed positions to the west since my last viper net to investigate some activity between the south coast of Iran and Oman in a body of water called the Gulf of Oman or GOO in Navy parlance. For those of you who are keeping track via the San Diego Union Chart, we are in in the upper portion of F6.

I'm very happy to report we all had about as good a Thanksgiving as one could have away from family and loved ones this week. The Mess Management Specialists (Cooks) out did themselves with an outstanding meal to include all of the traditional trappings. For those of you who are interested in what it takes to feed 390 hungry growing young sailors, it takes about 30 turkeys, 100 pounds of ham, 40 pounds of stuffing, 240 pounds of mashed potatoes, and 100 pounds of sweet potatoes. The Night Baker, crafted a huge sheet cake, capable of being divided into 100 pieces to go with an assortment of pies, fruit cake, and cookies. There was cranberry sauce and, yes for the Mom's out there including my own, there were both green beans with a nut sauce and assorted vegetables. The Senior Chief Mess Specialist, or Chief Stew Burner as we affectionately call him, had his troops up at 0400 to get all of this ready for the meal at 1600 (4:00 pm) on Thanksgiving day. The entire of S2 Division (Cooks and Mess Cooks) did an outstanding job. The day was capped with a full 16 hours of taped football (needed the ambiance) on one site TV channel and great movie selection on the other. We had golf ball chipping off of the flight deck (prepping for the off chance we will get into port somewhere), skeet shooting from the fantail, and took advantage of warm weather and bright sun to sit around and read a book.

Before moving on to the military activities of this week, I want to thank the many of you who responded to the Thanksgiving Viper Alert and the earlier ones showing support for our crew, the US Navy, and our Country. It has been truly gratifying to know all of you are out there supporting us every day as we go about the tough work of Operation Enduring Freedom. It reinforces our purpose. I try to send those comments on to the troops when appropriate. Thanks for the steady and outstanding support.

This week we stumbled on one of the greater tragedy's of the Third world. The night before last Allied ships operating in the Gulf of Oman stumbled across a group of open 20-25 ft boats making a trek from Pakistan to Iran. They were loaded to the gunwales with men and young boys. No provisions, no protection from the elements, no personal effects, and no life saving equipment. Turns out it is a smuggling operation, smuggling humans into Iran, then into other Gulf States to work. Our role was first to determine if these were people fleeing from Afghanistan (Taliban or Al Qaida fighters), they weren't, then we were directed to escort them to the nearest land to be sure they got there safely. We will remain on station here for another day or two to see if there are more, then I expect we will return back to the Battlegroup.

To close on a positive note, we are starting to get packages in with a Christmas feel to them. Our Family Support Group has assembled and wrapped a Christmas gift for every crewmember. They are received and under the tree. We expect to be on our way home by Christmas and, if all goes well will be in a port visit, so your crewmembers will have access to real telephones. **We will be home on time.** Thanks again for the great support and the Thanksgiving messages. All the best to our families.

Warm regards/CAPT R.T. Rushton, USN/CO

039 Nov. 29, 2001

All,

We have just posted some great new ANTIETAM Public Website features. They are three new additions to the "Crew's Button," The Air Department, Maritime Interdiction Operations, and an Archives. To get to them, just click on bottom banner on the cover page. When the index page comes up, click on the button labeled "Crew." Next click on the button that looks like the Joker in Batman (Det logo) to see the Air Department. To see Maritime Interdiction click on "MIO" and to get to the Archives, click on the safe at the bottom. The Archives will give you two options to look at. They are previous divisions from "Division Highlights" that have been replaced as we try to highlight each division in turn. In the future, you can expect we will move older stuff into the Archives so you can visit those great works when you want and we can keep fresh stuff on the main pages.

We have also changed to a new Division under " Division Highlights." This month we are Featuring "CC Division" which are the sailors responsible for on information management and communications. Our favorite Communications Officer is also shown (hint for COMMO's family!). It includes a good brief description of what they do.

For those of you who haven't had the opportunity in the past to visit the ANTIETAM Public Website, the address is [www.cg54.navy.mil](http://www.cg54.navy.mil). Those who hit it periodically may have to refresh your favorites and the pages depending on your web browser to see the new stuff. As I've mentioned before, we do not put names on the website for our sailor's and their family's safety. However, we try to capture life in ANTIETAM and hopefully to give you a chance to get a glimpse of your special crewmember. I suspect you can pick out the right crewmember without a caption:-). If you have comments or suggestions regarding the website, click on the Webmaster button on the index page and he will get your thoughts.

All for now. The mail came yesterday. There was over 1800 pounds of it. We haven't had a mail drop since we left the Gulf. Christmas is starting to flow in. We have lots of packages to start putting under trees. The Christmas trees are starting to up. Hope all is well with all of you out there. Our thoughts and prayers are with you.



Warm regards/CAPT R.T. Rushton, USN/CO

**040 Dec. 2, 2001**

All,

This 89th day underway since we last were in port and 2nd day of December finds us as the Battle Force Air Defense Commander (3 Carrier Battle Force) for the North Arabian Sea. This significant responsibility is really what ANTIETAM is designed and manned to do. Additionally, we are the "Shotgun" or main air and surface defense battery for our own Battle Group Aircraft Carrier. What both of these responsibilities mean is we are busy. The battle force air defense job requires controlling the airspace up to Afghanistan. The two strike Carriers are sending daily sorties of aircraft in to bomb targets in the last remaining strongholds of the Al Qaida Terrorist troops and their supporting Taliban fighters. We make sure the aircraft friendly identification systems are working and that they follow the proper attack routes so they don't bump into one another and know what other friendly aircraft are in the area. Additionally, we are responsible for making sure strike aircraft meet in the appropriate places for airborne refueling or get set with land based aircraft for coordinated strikes. We also assign the force air defense fighter aircraft to surface control ships for battle force air defense. Our responsibility as the "shotgun" for our own Carrier means our missile and gun systems are used to provide protection for the CVN as she gets her aircraft in the air and safely recovered. It takes all 33 of our Operations Specialists 12 hours on and 12 hours off (what we call Port and Starboard watch standing), along with about 10 Fire Controlmen and 5 officers at any given time to keep track of all of the moving parts. They are doing a magnificent job.

I want to spend a couple of sentences today mentioning some of the great unsung hero's that keep ANTIETAM in the fight day to day, but don't often get into the lime light. They are a great group of Engineers. The Engineering Department is about 70 men and women (well one woman, our very capable Main Propulsion Division Officer) strong. You can think of them as the people who run the power, electric lights, water, sewage, and air-conditioning systems for a small town. They also provide most of the crewmen that make up ANTIETAM's Fire Department, provide hazardous material handling, and monitor environmental quality throughout the ship. Finally, they keep us capable of going 30+ Knots (about 35 mph) at the drop of a hat, make enough water (desalination plants that make about 40,000 gallons of fresh water a day), keep the galley ovens and stoves working, and keep track of the fuel and oil we consume. In short, without them, those folks I mentioned in the first paragraph could not do their jobs, nor could we serve the some 1500 meals we prepare, take showers, see what we are doing, and very importantly run the sophisticated electronics systems that are the heart of our main weapons battery. They work individually about 12 hours a day maintaining equipment, managing the systems that make ANTIETAM, go and standing watch in the propulsion plant. I know many of your

special crewmembers are in this group. I am extremely proud of their steady outstanding work and hope you are too.

The Christmas Season is starting to show its face throughout the ship. We are extremely fortunate to have a great Family Support Group (mostly spouses of some of our sailors) that has been doing yeoman's work providing us with all the trappings we need. At last report, the FSG Executive Committee has sent over 70 boxes of decorations and gifts for the crew. They have made sure every sailor in ANTIETAM has something under the tree, in addition to the great things each of you have sent to your special crewmember. We have also been the benefactors of the great patriotism of several groups of young people who have sent us cards, letters, goodies, and banners from several schools throughout the US. It has been an uplifting heartfelt experience. We are thankful every day for all of the effort everyone has put out in our support.

On the ship's schedule front, our schedule has been approved to start home on time. Additionally, ANTIETAM has been directed to make an additional port visit in India on our travels home. We will be able to disclose the dates and specific location about 48 hours prior to our scheduled arrival. The other stops on our return transit remain unaffected. Until the next Viper Alert, we hope all is well at home. Our hearts and thoughts are with you.

Warm regards/CAPT R.T. Rushton, USN/CO

041 Dec. 2001

All,

It is Sunday, the 95th underway day since our last port call. In Navy parlance, we have 40 days and a "wake up" until we are pierside in San Diego:-). I'm happy to say as we wind up our time on the Battle Line in OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM that it has been awarding time, but we are all ready to come home to our friends, family, and loved ones. Today was a "no fly day" for our Air Group. It is time for the Carrier to give their flight deck crews a brief respite from around the clock operations and for the Air Group maintenance crews to get much needed maintenance done on the 70 some attack and fighter aircraft that have been making daily combat runs over Afganistan. Our role during days like this are to maintain air defense for the Carrier with our missile systems. We also took responsibility for the Battle Group Commander's communications so the CVN can execute maintenance on its major communications and command and control systems. Our crew is able to do that as a matter of routine. In short, we were able to relax a little today as well, with a "Steel Beach" barbeque, sponsored by our Chief Petty Officer's Mess, and a "Swim Call."

This week, I want to take a minute to highlight another group of "unsung heroes" that have done a magnificent job behind the scenes in keeping ANTIETAM ready to deal with any combat contingency. They are the ship's gunnery and gun fire control divisions. Our main gun battery is centered around two 5 inch, 54 caliber gun mounts. They are able to throw high velocity shells

with a variety of fuses and explosives over 10 miles. These guns require constant attention to keep them ready to go as well as having one of the two mounts manned and ready to react on short notice. Our secondary gun battery are a couple of 25mm crew served weapons and several 50 caliber and M-60 machine guns. As you can imagine, they sit out in the salt spray and weather so they too have to be constantly cleaned, maintained and test fired. For these weapons we have a team called the SCAT that mans them on short notice and are the key armament against small boat attack. These teams are augmented with our Sonar Gang since their equipment is not required in shallow water. The ratings that were did this great work and were on constant alert, are Gunner's Mates (GM), Fire Controlmen (Non-AEGIS)(FC), and Sonar Technicians (STGs). Many of them were also on the security teams we used when we up doing Maritime Interdiction Operations in the Gulf. They would take some of their precious "off time" from security duty to keep these weapons fully combat ready. They also were responsible for issuing and cleaning the 50 9mm pistols, and 25 shotguns used by the security forces. As a result of their great work, ANTIETAM had a 100 percent readiness condition in all of its gun armaments. I am extremely proud of their professionalism and diligence in this work.

Our schedule has been approved now all of the way through the 7th Fleet Area (Western Pacific) and 3rd Fleet Area (Hawaii and the West Coast of the US). We will include it in our next mailing of the OMBUDSMAN News Letter. As I mentioned last week, our first port visit will be to the country of India. I will send you a Viper Alert about 48 hours prior to our arrival for dates and port location. It should be a facinating visit.

I have included a picture of a personnel transfer we did with the Carrier this week while we were alongside to take some fuel. It is one of he many routine operations that happen in keeping people, parts, and supplies flowing in a Battle Group. I hope all is well with all of you. Our hearts and minds have turned to keeping the count of the days until we return.

Warm regards/CAPT R.T. Rushton, USN



Highline2\_IMG.JPG



CVN5\_IMG.JPG

**042Dec. 13, 2001**

All,

It is underway day 98. We are on our way to Mumbai (Bombay) India for a port visit. It is situated on India north central western coast and is the only deep water port in the west. We will arrive there around noon on Saturday the 15th of December. That will be in during the night for you Friday or early Saturday AM depending on where you are in the US. We have been informed that there is an

international telephone exchange right in the port complex where we will be moored. By the time you get up Saturday morning, your special crewmember should have access to this service.

This port call is actually a mission that we have been ordered to execute for Commander, U.S. Seventh Fleet to support military to military interaction and understanding between the U.S. and Indian Navies. As such, we will be engaged in a series of tours, receptions, and sporting events with our professional counterparts assigned to ships and the Headquarters of the Indian Western Fleet. Around the those events, we are looking forward to an exciting port visit.

Mumbai (Bombay) is the second largest city in India, and ranked somewhere around fourth or fifth in the world. As such, it is larger than New York City. For most of India's colonial era, Bombay was the headquarters of the British East India Company, who governed the region on behalf of the British Crown through part of the 18th and much of the 19th Century. It was during the Victorian era, mid-late 1800s, that the British Government appointed the first Viceroys of India. They governed until just after World War II when India was given its independence.

Keep an eye out for pictures on the ANTIETAM Public Website:-)

Warm regards/CAPT R.T. Rushton, USN/CO

043Dec.17, 2001

All,

We arrived safely in Bombay on Saturday the 15th of December. We were released from our duties guarding the Aircraft Carrier on Thursday night and made our way south about 700 NM to arrive on time. Enroute we had about 4 hours where we could slow down so 1st Division (Boatswain's Mates) could get over the side and touch up the sides of the ship where the salt and sea has left some ugly rust marks.

Once we arrived, it has been steady tours and interaction with the Indian Navy. It is the mission we came for. They are a very professional and capable naval force. The center piece of this effort was a reception held on the flight deck, complete with sunset parade for all of the local Counsel Generals (Australia, France, Russia, US), our Consulate staff, and about 30 officers from the Indian Navy. The Mess Specialists (MS) and our mess cooks did a tremendous job of catering what turned out to be a great party. Our own band played the background music and gave us a great show at the end of the evening for those who really like Rock. The seamen and junior Petty Officers who were the "side boys" and color detail were spectacular as well.

The crew has had the opportunity to see Bombay as well. It is a huge city as I reported earlier. It has a lot of remaining colonial charm from the British era as well as many modern sites. It unfortunately has a huge poverty stricken population as well, and its attending filthy conditions in large portions of the city. It is a stark reminder of how fortunate we are in America.

Today, we have about 30 of our crew along with an equal number from USS OKANE, who is here with us, off during a Community Relations Project at one of the local state run Orphanage schools. Mostly it is cleaning up and painting, with plenty of time off to play with the kids. We were able to donate a bunch of toys as well to add a little something to the lives of these youngsters. It is a tribute to the great young men and women of our crews to take their own Liberty time to go and do this project. Look for some pictures on our Website in the near future.

Tomorrow morning, Tuesday the 18th of December we sail with the tide. We have to literally do that in this case because the channel is not deep enough for us to get down it except at high tide. We will be officially headed for home and are greatly looking forward to it. We will be in port for Christmas. I will announce the dates and location when we are about 48 hours from there in accordance with Fleet operational security requirements. Until then All the best. We are down to 32 days and a wakeup before we are home.

Warm regards/CAPT R.T. Rushton, USN/CO

044Dec. 18, 2001

All,

I am happy to report we are safely underway from Mumbai (Bombay) India. The crew were excellent ambassadors. We have left many new friends, both in the Indian Navy and the U.S. Consulate. We are headed home:-). It is now 31 days "and a wake up" to San Diego.

Warm regards/CAPT R.T. Rushton, USN/CO

045 Dec. 20, 2001

All,

It is now 29 days and a "wake up" until we are pier side in San Diego:-) With that, thoughts and planning both on the ship and with our Family Support Group have turned to organizing the homecoming celebration for the ship. There are some challenges that make this homecoming a bit more complex than those of the past. Most of those challenges center on the new Force Protection rules in effect around the Naval Station San Diego (32nd Street) and procedures for getting on the installation to meet the ship. **If you are planning on meeting the ship on arrival these procedures pertain to you:**

**For those who have an active duty military ID card or valid Dependent's ID card. You will be given access to the Base on that alone. If you have a valid Dependent's ID and your children are under the age of 10, they do not need to be registered below. If they are older than 10, they should have their Dependent's ID as well.**

**For all others. Please email the information described below to the following email address: VIPERHOMECOMING@CS.COM**

**1) The full name and Rank or Rate of the ANTIETAM Crewmember you are meeting (Example: FC2 Frederick C. Sailor)**

**2) Your full name and the name of each person who will be with you, to include children regardless of age.**

**3) Your relationship to the ANTIETAM Crewmember you are meeting (e.g. mother, father, sister, cousin, friend, etc.)**

**It is very important for each of you to register this information in advance. If you are not on the list we certify, Base access may be denied.**

**Everyone must park outside the base near Gate 9. There will be shuttle buses to take you down to the Head of the pier ANTIETAM is assigned on return. The shuttle will run from 0715 to 1200 from Buildings 279 and 280 on 8th Street across from Gate 9. For those of you who are coming from out of town, we will send a future Viper Net Alert with directions to the parking area from the major freeway accesses.**

**If you have questions, email the address above or just respond to this Viper Net Alert and we will answer them. Stay tuned for additional information:-)**

**We are looking forward greatly to a cheerful reunion with our loved ones and families. The FSG is putting together a great program to keep the kids busy, provide refreshments, and make this a memorable occasion for all.**

**Warm regards/CAPT R.T. Rushton, USN/CO**

**The information needed is: 1) crew member's name and Rank/Rate, 2) Each persons name planning on attending and 3) their relationship to the crew member, i.e. mother, father, friend, uncle, etc. (Master Chief Smith of 32nd Street told Erika we needed the last. I'm not sure why, but we will comply best we can.) Send this information to VIPERHOMECOMING@CS.COM. The shuttle will run from 0715 to 1200 from buildings 279-280 on 8th street across from Gate 9.**

**046 Dec. 22, 2001**

**All,**

**It is 28 days "and a wake up" before ANTIETAM moors at Naval Station San Diego. We are presently in the Malacca Strait, (For those of you who have the San Diego Union tracking chart, we are in block I-14, lower right corner) headed for a port visit to the wondrous and familiar surroundings of Singapore. We will moor, tomorrow, the 23rd of December, for several days of R&R before we make the next leg of our voyage toward home.**

Since the crew will be on liberty Christmas Day, we are having our primary Christmas celebration today, 22 December. It promises to be fun day with an expected visit from "Sailor Claus," yes folks Santa did his hitch in the USN. Every year he returns from the Fleet Reserve and makes sure each sailor in every ship gets at least one gift in appreciation for their dedicated service. We are expecting him and his "motor whaleboat, pulled" by eight tiny porpoises any minute. We have our close in air defense weapons on "safe" for his arrival:-). There will be gift giving, a Xmas door decorating competition, and most importantly Christmas Dinner with all of the trappings.

For the Christmas purists out there, and I count myself as one, we will have repeat Christmas dinner and the full religious observance on Christmas Day in Singapore for the duty section and any crewmember who chooses to participate. Chaplain King has organized our own "Sunrise" Service on the Flight Deck and he has made sure that crewmembers have service options for every faith that Christmas observed.

Warm regards/CAPT R.T. Rushton, USN/CO

**047 Dec. 27, 2001**  
**South of Singapore**

All,

We got underway this morning from spending four days in Singapore, for Christmas. It was a fun port visit for all, and a good break before starting the next leg of our transit home. It is now 22 days and "wake up" to San Diego. When we left Singapore, the winds were whipping about 25 kts and we were in a steady down pore. It is the Monsoon season in tropics. We exited the Singapore Strait about 1030 (local) and turned toward the Equator, about 60 miles to south of us. At 1045 (local), "Dave Jones" came aboard through the "Bull Nose" (a line handling opening right in the very bow of the ship) and demanded we "heave to" and prepare for the arrival of his "Royal Highness, Neptunus Rex." We, of course, did was ordered. "Neptunus Rex" demanded we present all of our "slimy Pollywogs" (those personnel who had never crossed the equator) for inspection. They were to be brought to him in proper salty fashion by ANTIETAM's certified "Trusty Shellbacks" (those fortunate sailors who had been properly presented in a previous court, e.g. crewmen who had crossed the equator at some previous time in their lives). The seas were 6-8 feet, the wind was about 35 knots, and it was raining. After about two and a half hours of being salted down with fire hoses and learning how to properly present themselves to the "Royal Court" (Consisting of King Neptunus Rex, his regal advisor Davy Jones, and the "Royal Baby."), I am happy to say all offending "slimy wogs" were properly transformed into "Trusty Shellbacks." (Note: For those who are unfamiliar with the rituals of the sea, the "Crossing the Line Ceremony" is time honored tradition amongst sailors. The U.S. Navy the tradition from the Royal Navy, who has executed the crossing ritual for hundreds of years.)

The next leg of our transit will take through the South China Sea, through the Philippine Archipelago, and into the Pacific. We will continue to train and maintain our warfighting proficiencies along the way. Next stop Hawaii. We are on track to be home on time. I hope this holiday season continues to find all of you well.

Warm regards/CAPT R.T. Rushton, USN/CO

048 Dec. 30, 2001

south of Mindano Island

All,

We are now 20 days and "a wake up" from San Diego. Since getting underway from Singapore, we have had a very successful visit from King Neptune and his Royal Court as we dipped down to cross the Equator. We actually found ourselves in the midst of a pretty lively developing tropical disturbance that made that time honored maritime tradition pretty exciting. At one point, we were in over 50 knots of wind and 8-10 ft seas. I'm happy to say everyone made it through initiation and storm in good shape. I am sure it is because King Neptune's rage over having "slimy pollywogs" in the ranks subsided after they were properly inducted into the raging main and became "Trusty Shellbacks." (See Viper Net Alert 047)

Since then, we have crossed the South China Sea in company with the rest of the Battle Group and we passed into the Philippine Archipelago late yesterday afternoon. Our track took us just south of the main western most island of Palawan and into the Sulu Sea. At about 0700 local this morning we traveled through the Basilan Strait, between the south western tip of Mindanao and Basilan Island. We are now in the Celebes Sea and will remain so until sometime late this evening when we exit the eastern side of the Archipelago and into the Western Pacific. From there we are on the Great Circle route to Hawaii. For those of you who are following our movements on the San Diego Times Union Tracking Chart, we are in the bottom portion of box I-19.

We are spending most of our transit time homeward bound in catching up with a significant amount of routine equipment maintenance actions, primarily on our weapons and sensor systems that had to be deferred while operating in the hazard zones of the Northern Arabian Gulf and North Arabian Sea. It is keeping most of our Combat Systems and Weapons Department personnel pretty busy. The Engineers are getting ready for a major inspection, called the Mid Cycle Assessment, by our Group Commander's staff to evaluate our ability to routinely operate and manage ANTIETAM's propulsion and auxiliary plants. They will also review a very significant repair and refit work package that will be undertaken on our return. The Operations Department remains busy since we are the Air Defense Commander for the Battle Group on the return transit. Although, there are no real air threats along our route, we still must provide routine air surveillance and provide air space management for the Air Wing as they continue routine training missions. They are also tasked with developing our post



deployment report that goes to our Battle Group Commander, then on to the Commander in Chief U.S. Pacific Fleet to document operations, actions, and lessons learned.

We are presently scheduled to arrive in Pearl Harbor on about the 8th of January and will spend several days there for a final R and R stop and to offload some equipment prior to commencing the "Viper Cruise" to San Diego. We have some 50 "Vipers" registered (relatives of crew members) and look forward to meeting those of you in that group on about the 13th. Until then, have a Happy New Year and stay safe.

Warm regards/Capt R.T. Rushton, USN/CO

049 Jan. 1, 2002

All,

A Happy New Year to all! It is 18 days and "a wake up" to San Diego. ANTIETAM was in position 08 degrees, 55 minutes north latitude, and 134 degrees, 03 minutes east longitude on the stroke of midnight 1 January 2002. For those who don't trust their navigation plotting skills or have a general atlas, we were about 100 miles north, northwest of Palau Island and 240 miles almost due west of the Island of Yap in what is actually the Philippine Sea. For those with a San Diego Union tracking chart, we were in the middle right portion of block I-21.

We had a great New Years Eve party starting about 2200 (10:00PM) on the Mess Deck, then moved up under the main mast on the weather decks to watch a midnight gunnery display for the Battle Group, sponsored by ANTIETAM. On the Mess Deck, there were good eats, put out by the Mess Specialists (we went through over 120 lbs of "hot wings," 5 cases of nachos and several big tins of cheese). Up on the weather deck, the ship's band played some lively music (our new Damage Control Assistant, sat in on a few numbers. Turns out she is an accomplished drummer. For STG2's family, not to worry, he is still the lead drummer and our favorite. Treated us to a great solo:-) The Signalmen rigged up our own lighted ball to drop from the forward mast, and the Gunner's Mates treated us to a 6 round illumination with 14 rounds of 5 inch high explosive gunnery and tracer small arm machine gun fire. (as we always try to do, these gunnery events were also required training evolutions, so the ammunition expended went to more than just show). We had all of the sparkling cider one could drink and, of course the "seagar" (cigar in landlubber terms) lamp was lighted.